

□□□□□À
J

JÀNote: If we lead off w/ this c, then Red sd say something at our last look at him which hooks back.

rem it's gonna take grunt work

2

May 7, 1945□ V.E. Day

ÁÁ
surreal images off the bat and throughout

0

9

Through one of those horizontal spring days full of waves of

pink and white petals and their sudden perfumes óalong with whirling paper and grit.

I ran through the sweet odors; once in what seemed an endless cloud of creamyÜhÜÇpetals I halted to unwrap newspapers from my legs. Another time

a tiny glass needle shot into my cheek at the precise moment the flying day darkened temporarily to□night.

I resumed running in that darkness, towards a trolley car I wanted to catch which the sunlight was ap ng over, rendering it a

buttery toy at the end of my vision. I slowed my steps when I saw it was just standing there, the motorman doing something to the cable thaô held the trolley mechanism to the overhead wire.

In a second a newspaper was blown into him, surrour4pd his head as he flashd out at it with a butcher knife. I saw then, splaying out in the racing sunlight, the fra yed ends of a few strands of that cable. He went back to his sabotage, reflections of the knife skipping across the milky blue of the nearby tavern window. When I got closer I could see the window had been pushed in, was resting against a barstool a foot or so inside the tavern. There were large brown pieces of glass from whiskey bottles on the pavement along with a jigsaw assortment of other pieces, and through all of this a small man with a soaking-wet apron down to his slioctops itself was walking a strLAW broon) right as sun,as the motorman was still hacking ferociously away at the trolle3r cable. And when I *rri-4edly hopping into light, he had joined the bartender on the sidewalk and was trying to wrestle the broom from him. At first it seeMed an earnest struggle bAt they were hooting and laughing; ÜhÜ£24

finally they let it skitter off, soon toasting each other with fifths of whiskey, both laughing again as the motomarlpunched at the swirling dirt and paper with the hand holding the bottle, then licked the hand to capture the whiskey that had been sloshed, the Vawness of which thrust up my nostrils as I ran past them, jumping over the broom and barely keeping my balance on the slippery glassxwith the bartender offering his bottle and doing his own shuffling pantomime. As patches of corm yellow and bruise-colored light waved over us I rushed on to intercept another trolley line curving in three blur-ks further. Their laughter followed me upon the wind but I wondered if they were la4ighing at me or at a bum who was running back and forth inside the trolley car, the removable control handle in his blackened hand.,and making what he conceived to be trolley noises, I ran harder to outrace that laughter, past workmen and their wives sitting on porches and listening ot the radio, usually big consoles with round dials hauled out from living rooms for the occasion. I thought then that the rooted, stolid couples looked like photographs in Life Magazine.

They strained to catch the source of that laughter chasing me
but
it was washed out by shrieking cacaphony growing towards us from
the trolley I hoped to catch.
I jumped off the curb to run between the tracks, thinking to
beatÜhÜwhat I could see now was an open trolley to the
convergence
point; then I could run directly ahead of it to the stop. I was
at the point of giving up because of its crisp pace but when it
reached the curve leading onto my track it had to slow
drastically,
almost tipping, the people inside rushing to the high side with
a cry of whoa. The car was headed YALE BOWL, the only line
still
to have
r?
open trolleys, but it was like getting downtown of course, so these
roisters could

bring their celebration to the one which reached me as a sort
of

25

0
faraway rustle punctuated by horns and whistles.
I was at the trolley stop, panting, watching that car lean
excruciatingly back to vertical and pick up speed. For some
reason É„!B„!B„!B„!Bar white flat-sided Éin bottle wedged
into the scrawny network of a privet hedge
beside me. I must extract it before the trolley stops. A
contest. But when I looked up the trolley was ;Surprisingly
large and picking up
more speed.)and I waved my arms for it to stop, the gin
bottleÜhÜstill in my white
hand, its reflections dancing everywhere. But the trolley
was
passing, jammed with workmen in their brown and gray clothes.
○Throw it→ someone screamed. Leô's see your amé□□Leô's éee your
cockill added
a woman who was leaning towards me, barely three feet away as
the
trolley again tipped, her face like a balloon full of blood.

meini leaned out to pull her back, their hands swarming her enormous breasts. A sleepy-looking man had a gash on his forehead, and even as the trolley rushed by, dirt floated into that brownish-looking cut and glowed like mica.

A black cloud clamped down, making the rest of the faces blue-black rubber as they snapped by. I flung the bottle and it fell short of the rear skirts, spraying up a shower of muddy looking glass.

I jammed my eyes shut and inhaled the burning electrical smell which heavy

hung in the air, the iron smell of wheel grinding rail too.

I opened them to see tiny blue sparks flying from the overhead trolley, large gold ones drifting up from the wheels. The yellowish rear growing smaller and smaller, absorbed into a sullen blackness.

Once again the light is full and brilliant, and just as suddenly another trolley waits at the curb, its door open, the driver patiently studying the track ahead. I jump on, still panting and, I suppose, wide-eyed at seeing a large freckled hand over the coinbox. I look up into a freckled face topped by

ÜhÜ£26

gray hair fringed dull red. Company treat whether they know it or not- he announced, swinging the handle to his left which closed the doors. Then he quietly asked me "How many wars end on my run? At least the European section thereof;

140 spun the power handle and we lurched off, the rails squealing.

And though his eyes were stony his voice took on the enthusiasm of a master of ceremonies, stopping me as I was walking to the rear. Would you inquire after the wily Jap? Come on back here and sit beside me. Fair white flat-sided hell. Anyways, we

are already got him beat in the movies. Movies are

a great invention. Why with his big teeth and bad breath and atrocities! He gave a small, almost coquettish wave as I sat behind him. ,Shit! ff

I shifted on the s, Ivan? nagging rattan seat. Shall we talk about the Bear; in his window;

His eyes took on the dimmest shine/ one whole neighborhood flew by,

several wide-open mouths at trolley stops. Why not speak of him now before it's too late; I was moving towards the aisle and away

from the middle portion of my seat which had been freshly slashed. I repeated! He twisted around over his right shoulder to study me, wrinkling his freckled forehead. Shall we discuss the

Russians; He looked back to the street. Okay with me long I get downtown. I could recognize, of course, one of these adults who taught, usually sarcastically. I studied his back, the threadbare uniform coat. Hell. Anyways, we amy head around like Éharlie McCarthy all the way downtown, whatsay you move over here next to the door. Émy head around like 11 But it's my problÉm to which I refer. 11 There was a window to his left held up by a strap. He snapped it free an he window chattered down, a hot wind amplifying his thin red hair. I lock the speed up at its fastest.

27

Like so. Then ... 11 He removed the power handle, revolved it over his head like a baseball pitcher waming up. I throw it out this window unless ... to I moved. He put the handle back on, chuckling, knocked the speed down two notches. Yo're a genuine hero, kid. Just saved whole bunch of lives, no shit. Wai'll we get downtown: waves and waves of people. You look scared. Never ridden with a madman before?ltAll the time. 11 The two and three story houses, the 17, b rded-up grocery stores were clicking by with a pleasant regularity. All the time! Hey yo're all right. You see humor in prevailing tragedy. 11 I was emboldened. It suppose to be celebration, not tragedy. We b(at the Germans didn't we; Yah yah yah yahe went form laughing to choking and spitting, hunched and smaller over the control box, his face scarlet, the outline of a shoulder pad on his black unifem coat showing up a dirty silvery color. Asthma croaked, from my youth. Get rid of your youth fast as you can. This shit is what kept me out of Spain. 11 I knew nothing about SpainA of the Russians that they were our allies, that we had met them a week or so ago on a smoking pile of rubble in a destr yed German city, embraced them, showed off our flashy wristwatches, sold some. He still fought for breath. Hell ... maybe I will ... get to Russia. Cause wå43! them nåxt. What the helli Lifå them n; For såme reason he knocked down our speed another notch and we were inching past the Winchester Repeating Ar-ms Plant which looked abandoned. He turned to me,

grimy images of bricks moving Éll  But ii4s my probled gray eyes. What Ée said made the skin on the back of my hands prickle but he had merely seen the same newspaper picture. Just cruse we sold them watches

28

and they kissed us Slavik style and held oq+ heroic Stalingrad do  t mean we wo  t fight them, little fellow. Why jimineee, jimmy-fuckin-nee, sentimentality is the art of the ruling class. You suck in the sugar while they shove it up your ass. Hey Éed gray eyes. What l me something, uh..É Say, what the helour name  Skipper   I bit off, not liking being c 4)led

little fellow.Well Skipper, yo  re gonna get educated today cause the  re screwing in the streets downtow  that is when the  re not  hing

windows and throwing bottles. Land of the brave.     And he flung the power handle forward and soon we were speeding through another neighborhood, whipping past small groups at the trolley stops, some of them waving their fists, passing undershirted workmen and their wives on porches, their waving at us and    laughing at those we were leaving behind.Andi: Red. Red the red,

aint that clever   After a moment he giggled and the we were riding with the door open and I could hear the rising din from downtown, but he snapped it Shut wheoever we came to a trolley stop. Just us, Skipper. Just usl Fuck everybody else, aint that right   I guess. I must have shown my concern for those who misjudged his speed and tried to cross the tracks, especially a couple of older women with shopping bags. Goddamn I just miss and

miss and miss. Just do  t have the killer instinct. Él me something, uh..ot the Yankees.    Co  ld you maybe go slower again  Tell me some ng, Skipper. Ho  d you discover that

word? Tha  s a

good fuckin word, maybe. What may be. You stick with that word.

Not should be but may be. Cause nothing ever happens but that the big boys grind your balls off but you keep thinking maybe. Cause tha  s hope and ther     For s and so  you might as well hope. Ydu do it for me, okay  

Brown paper bags covered with grease spots flew out from under the seats and bottle-rolled down the aisle as our express trolley

rushed on. Red took out a nearly full bottle of Southern Gentleman from under his seat, upended it, his red hair falling thinly back, the caramel-colored liquid gurgling. Some kids were placing pennies on the rails in front of us. When

I turned to see them out the rear

window-picking up the flattened pennies, Red burped and wheezed.

I looked back to him as he was tossing the bottle past me and out the opened door to shatter among the carpet of glass already there. Crystal day—he portentiously announced. I shrugged. Never mind, Skipper, you just keep your eyes peeled once we get downtown cause it's whores or jellybean—take your choice. One dame

is blowing all comers in honor of her husband—Niseävice with Patton.11—Yeah sure.11

His red-gray eyebrows lifted. You don't believe me. Not the Yankees.11—Believe me neither. Bet that's all right. Believe me neither. Byself to go fuck myself anyway.11 I laughed and he pounded on his control box like a drummer in the

movies, going so fast that the freckles seemed to run together on

his hands. The door stayed open and open-mouthed people flung by. Stay away from the kind of people you'll meet downtown—says my mother, combing my hair among the silhouettes of enemy planes and ships lining the walls of my room. But I wanted to see everything I could of course.

Sex was a disc-like thing in my house, thin and wobbling but nonetheless emitting signals I could sense even in the middle class tableau of my father reading the paper while my mother darned socks. It wasn't the speeding electricity that was coming at me now, but some crushed and straining entity the release of which would eventually destroy everything.

Uh—E30

We had reached the downtown district and he had to slow the trolley and close the door since a coke bottle had come

whistling
 in just missing Reäsehead and crashing through the small window
 he had
 threatened to throw the control handle through ten minutes
 previously. In a few minutes we hardly moved: the combined
 weight of the swams pressing against the trolley from both sides
 made the wheels slip and jerk, and I held onto that ripped seat
 as if it were a sled. Finally the crowd in front parted and we
 picked up to about wad king speed, hundreds of faces melting by
 the door. Red the Reähewhät the brilliant intellectuals down at
 the
 carbarn call me. That and rebel, hillbilly, cracker.
 Wilmington, Delaware Éyself to go fuck myself A grimy s.,a%Lor
 Éad pressed his face against the glass of the
 door and was trotting alongside. Theüre like these propaganda-fed
 cretins- Red spat, coaxing enough speed from the trolley to make
 the sailor slide away, wall-eyed against the rubbing life of the
 street. Yoöd better take it easy- I whispered and he inexplicably
 brought the car to a stop, and just as inexplicably the crowd
 flowed away and it grew almost silent in the trolley car, the
 outside noise sounding like a kind of sunny buzzing until a
 cloud
 of smoke drifted past, bits of white paper whirlpooling
 inside. Tell me something, Skipper ... 11 He had turned and I
 could see his full face, the gray eyes sunken and immensely
 weary. you ever hear of a Carthaginian victory? Was it ag st
 Rommel?- His laugh proved quiet and tired, and made me
 feelÜjÜstronger.
 s just where you give up too much. Doit worry about it.
 I taught you something. And now wå and so Crystaå Night and you
 never heard of
 that neither. 11 I shrugged, told him I should get off. Stay the
 way you are ... people take locker next to yours. And keep

31

your eyes open cause yoöre in pit now, tucking all over the
 place as I said, and even up the ass. Fights everywhere.
 Bottles coming from every point of the capitalistic compass.
 Winning is losing but money never lost a war. Promise me yoöll
 never forget that. É11 A grimy s.,a%Lor do. 11 I diåand I
 haÉeiôbut then I started to reach over his body
 to get at the door handle because he was muttering Red save
 world
 with Wilson. Red save Spain. Read all about it. knerican

Facists win war. Treason prospers.11 He suddenly brightened and sat erect, flipped the tiny handle near the bottom of the coin box and scooped out a handful of change. He let me open the door so he could throw out the money past me and into the street. Kids began fighting over it, and Red was suddenly screaming—Children beg in the streets while the peasants dream of steak and beer. The sailor was abruptly there, flocks of dirt and foam around his chapped and purple mouth. I wanted to jump out but was afraid of him. The bosomy woman from the open trolley appeared and he punched her in the breast. She swam into the lake of glass and coins. I leaped over her, feeling the force of Red's hand on my back. Somebody's gonna kill you, sailor, and I hope it's me! He slammed the door as the sailor tried to lunge up the stairs. Heil America! Red as the sailor clawed at the door he leaving streaks of blood. I backed slowly away, afraid that the-Nazi-or would associate me with Red, who now bellowed—Crystal Might, Kristallnacht! Kristallnacht! Kristallnacht!!! The sailor shook his head and gave up, taking the crowd with him. When I last looked back at the trolley I was about twenty feet up the tracks and the two front windows held smoky suns, behind which Red's face, fiery in forehead and heavily shadowed underneath, looked like a death mask.

32

As I studied him I became aware of heat at my back. A bonfire blazed behind me. It was comprised of furniture, and huge bubbles formed and popped on a headboard, sending up black snakes of smoke. The only thing left in the shattered store window was an immense radio console with a large mirror atop it and a message in soap writing. WILL CONVERT TO TELEVISION. Two muscular boys were shoving the whole works over and the mirror flew up in huge shards which they then duelled with, slashing away—until they were left with stubs in their bleeding hands which

they star l at until the sailor came jitterbugging between them, leading a jubilant entourage. I tagged along until I heard a shaking basso voice off to my right. I stopped to see where it came from but the crowd had gone into reverse too and I had to plant myself in the front row. É do.11 I diäand I hathe Gemans. Ém Germén and I hatc the Comansill a fat man emphasized. Behind me I hear tho thud of flesh and snapped around to see blood firing from the sailoòs nostrils, his head jerking back and forth as he sunk. And Éthe Gemans. Ém Germt American Geman no Éerman German. Nois fat man l. a roll of fat across his neck and shoulders, a halo of sweat around his cannon ball head; she, equally as fat and-, in a shapeless colorless housedress, i ai; slapping a paper effigy of teeth and thick glasses made up mostly of orange paper. Slap the Jap- she invites, slap the dirty little Japill No one elmo,t

di6s and they seem/a wincing in the anticipation of some heckler. ed

She sh.004; the effigy and the wind caught i it and tur)R/it around,

carrying too the sad and desperate smell of their sweat. I closed my eyes expecting some dreadful disgrace to come upon them. The fat man tdok- a swing at the revolving Jap, his neck taut, bellowing Ét American Geman no r cent Americana ThiÉ is the greatest day of my life means it. You should hear him.11 She hod let go of the effigy could and it fÜhÜpast me and I hear it being kicked behind me.

33

Roosevelt this and Roosevelt that. He even tried to join the army. At his ageich army- somebody sneera4and her eyes lost focus and he raisej his fist but then dro ;4 it to his side as she rushe4 at me, that dress a ther huge sail and/shå Crystand I småll the same desperate smell but mixed with

kitchen odors.

As the folds of her dress cover me, I spy, hanging like a Christmas ornament against the smoke, a little girlfin face, glowing whitely, eyes leaping and scintillant. I had seen a face

like that in Wegeand I smn The Nãw York News. lipQ0KLYN

SCHOOLCHILDREN SEE

GAMBLER MURDERED IN. STREET,,,,

Now what you gonna do for me, huh; the fat woman yells at me to get the crowd laughing. The fat man is literally hopping. I need a great big manill she shakes me. The fire rising in my cheeks I get a daydream flash of both of these large apologetic Germans on the glassy pavement, smoke coiling up from hundreds of

wounds, their huge bodies being chucked by waves of blood.

She had released me, was turning away when her husband squealed, shaking with laughter all the while, ôShe woulda fixed that Hitlerl Broke hislogsillÉr cent Americana Thigs all rightl!lthe fÉt woman insisted in a voice which becameÜiÜ¢/strangely choked bite .,,,d for she saw the contents of the pail of garbage descending on her husband before he did, the coffee grounds and oranges, and grayish-green slime. That little

elfin girl-child shrieked in a serious of ascending bursts as a boy in knickers ran away carrying the empty bucket. I kill little bastard; shouted the fat man, a ribbon of gray slime around his bulging, beefy neck, but the woman caught up

34

to him, was soon wiping his face off with her skirt as he knelt. Papa papa papa- she consoled and all the while her eyes darted around. Break his bandy legsl!l Papa whispered. A c,

The crowd had completely left them. of the trailers, I would not look at them again, found myself in a procession being led by two men holding the sailor up above their heads. I was jostled by a toothless man wearing an overcoat covered with political campaign buttons, mostly WILKE. They said they was gonna skin him- he whistled. Be something see man skinned.!! I heard snapping noises which I could not associate with any-thing at all. I shoved very quickly past him

in order to eventually see who these men were. One was a soldier who was bare-chested but wore a marine officer's hat heavy with braid, the other was a mechanic with a one piece coverall which looked like one immense grease spot. They seemed to wait to function as the sailor's seconds in a fight, for they were goading him on now as he circled a baker, short and stocky in his starkly white uniform, and pulled at the potholders which hung from the baker's sleeves on elastic bands. The sailor minced around him, snapping a potholder from time to time.

14

Each time one snapped the baker swung and the odor of apples joined the air. Soon the baker was calling the sailor a disgrace to his uniform and the sailor was insisting that the baker was a disgrace to his, to the falling-down hysteria of his mates. The baker removed an orange apron hardly wider than a belt and proceeded to fold it with care, absently knocking away the sailor's hands during the whole process. The soldier was attempting to clear an area of glass by dragging the inside edge of his

about three or four feet at a sweep. You will not insult my manhood I

stated the baker, his sharp blue eyes aimed heavenward to dusk and smoke.

"Yes Dearie," cooed the sailor. The baker placed his dainty apron

at his feet and then stepped over it into the cleared area. The sailor

35

joined him with studied dignity, arranging his once-white uniform as the wind picked up and flapped their clothing, making the sailor look like an epileptic and the baker a hunchback.

Glaring

at each other, they waited for the wind to die then flew at each other only to be locked into a breathless, shuffling bearhug which ended when they gravitated outside the cleared area and

fell

and broke apart. The baker started up shakily, having acquired blotches oiblood at both knees. To the sailor it seemed to indicate a triumph and he was turning away with his arms high to provoke a cheer when his sneer was crashed inward by an extraordinary blow from the still-rising baker. That elf child shrieked again somewhere and we all were snapping our heads around to see where she was as the sailor sunk down and pitched forward and the baker was recoiling and just able to maintain his

balance. These heroes4l he taunted evcn while slipping, "these heroesill

The soldier and mechanic were draggin the sailor away, his knees madking two paths through the glass. The real heroes aint here, am I right; the baker began to plead. Theùre in Gemany or theÜiÜPacific. I would have gone. I would have. I was between wars.

A kid for the first, and now with my own business and a daughter to raise and no wife.11

Someone said not to worry about it, wasît in the cards, he was needed here, but the baker, even while noddng assent, kept muttering, "would have gone, go even now.11 Someone had handed him

his little orange apron and he sobbed into it. An old man whose tongue lolled in his mouth patted

him on the bac and ribbons of flour undulated, rld- rple inthe dusiryo 1074

light. No wife- the baker asserted flatl I\ é the é d man urinated in a

quikly diminishing arc.

The last witness , I ran away but right into a raw-lipped girl of

about my own age who fell upon my shoulder crying-Please oh please. Oh Godé

I juméed back but she held on, leaving her feet and ging from my neck

36

like a rag doll. That soldier- she was gasping, "he tried to put, his hand under my dress. one of the things started the fight.

Égs all right!lthe fell Éve gotta get hoÉe. I ... 11ÜhÜœBut
she held on, her words wet on my shoulder. If if if I caît be
with you Éell Éve gotta get hond woît be able to sÉop. I caît
help it. Nobody ever tried to do that
before. Put his hand... Hân The Nhrust hâr away enough so
that I could see
her pulsing face, wild and spiking hair, but couldât loosen her
grip on her neck. I doît wELnna hear about it. It aint MY
business.11

Three older girls ran by, arm in arm. ,,7ive her a kiss-
they
sang.

The bakeòs voice drifted in as lagot one of.,,her hands
loose.

◌WhereId

she go, my Belle;

She turned her face out from my shoulder to scream oh shut
up, Daddywas gasping by now but had both her hands gripped. Get
him...

take you home.11You kidding; She jerked her hands free, still
facing me, and rubbed her wrists, then licked each one slowly.

I

À

J

JÀhad to watch. He doît care. He just wanted his fight is all.11
In poked a grandmother in a silky polka dot dress. Take her
home, Sonny. She should be seeing these disgusting shows at her
age. She had underlined disgusting shows as if it were my
fault.I doît know anything about it. Leave me alone- I
protested but she

left shaking her head, a tiny white pillbox of a hat
round.Iôs no wonder you doît have mannersill she hissed. The
girand was on my elbow but I shook it off; then she had my hand,
pulling, and ran off dragging me. Her running was eccentric and
giddy and she tripped me more than once. Let me
goyelled,ÜjÜembarrassed by being handled so easily by a girl,
but I started
giggling along with her after a bit.

Old grandma didât miss

Look at them kidsl Theùre drunkill

The dark wind lifted her, billowing her polka dotted ski r and
v

rned her sideways. Through the crook of her elbow I could see
in miniature the lady from the open trolley kissing the

distracted baker, her tongue far far extended and glistening purple through the smoke and dusk. Look at all of that- her words joined the rushing wind as we ran on. Are it they stupid? And wåhrust hbe the åhildren.11 At that point I continued saying nothing, musing even in our acrid flight that I had never held a female hand this tightly. I let go with Hcy I really gotta get home. My mother..-uh uhd she was behind me, pushing. I have to thank you in a minute.11 Jesus thought I. She eventually pushed måbe the resistång-through the jagged arch left by the impartial shattering of the bakery window, spears of glass glistening with the glowing purple light of that early evening. She dusted off a danish against her blouse, blew on it, handed it to me., gi% motioned for me to follow her)and I thought I understood her strength when she looked pretty much like a boy from the rear. When we got to the workroom iî4he-i-ear she pulled a long piece of white wrapping paper off a roll, ripping it off slowly on the stationary knife which was part of the fixtureÜhÜwhich held it. She placejthe paper on a table and tried to lift me up to it. by my own power. Then, among the barrels of flour danish from me and broke off infinitesimal pieces, pinching tiny piece and putting it into my mouth. She was liking me -Xmvossible of course so I got up on the table she took the off each tiny with her coarse silently whispering lips and closed eyes and nondescript brown hair.

The girls in school had very very many reservations about me. ºWhy do you want to trdat me like a baby? I doî know.10 Her eyes4still closed. Well Énd woî be able to ss all right. it,s juÉt...nobody else was my age. Out there. Iôs just that I thought if I could find somebody my age it it it... wouldî be so

crazy. And so ... cruel.11I doî't know about that. And I think
I
should get ... before your fatherHim? Hå resistalways årunk.It
probablyYeah well you mother will ... The lids of the
barrels glowed

like corposants in that darkening room.
Didî't you hear him; The inside of her mouth was glowing too.
HisÜjÜlovely Belle; And then she fed me in
rhythm: Ding...dong...Belle.
Gone ... gone ... gonelf,Yeah, well me too.1,You haveî't finished
your danish.1,Yeah well I never will at this rate.11 Something
caught in my voice

and her whole face and tom boûs body softened. And in a way
which lifted
I
away the outside buzzing she whispered. That soldier could come
back.11És all right. it,s ju1 And I believed it Éven as I was
surprised sayingit.
Her head so slowly shaking. ll]:t Seared mc to death. To
death.to Yeah. Well. I could see that. I mean I didî't really
see anything. I mean what you said. I mean I didî't see him do
it. You told me about it but i ... e,Thaô's too bad- she teased,
and i felt the fire jolt my cheekbones. The danish was gone and
she was Playfully slapping my hands while singining in a
whisper, Blushing boy, blushing boy, whaô's he blushing for;

39

Soon my hands joined this slapping game and after a while there
we were face to face and staring, our hands carrying on almost
by
themselves.
And I waa the kid led to the house of sweets who was
alreadyÜjÜfull,
who had a day explode in his brain before the insinuating
silliness
we both half-played at her with hands still dreamily moving,
staring
, l-i c
at me with her green marbles of eyes, a few dark brown hairs
vibrating against the floury windows dusk-glowing.

Into our small breathing comes the sound of showers of glass,
and
an almost monotone squealing. Iô's awful about them~ she whispers,
holding my hands from moving, "how they act." Hey that stuff
costs
money. A lot of people go crazy. They go crazy! God! They they
they they go absolutely crazy; I find myself shouting and she,
frightened, wide-eyed, cases back against the flour barrels.
But Almost by the time I become aware of my own yelling, she
suddenly brightens, swings past me to the roll of paper when our
bodies touch that 3 4 instant, she bites the inside of her lip.
Soon she is wrapping me round and round with white paper and
slapping wet and glue-smelling manila tape variously. Okay now~
she injects into my own giggles. You're ready for a customer to
take home.

And I feel

ÜhÜ

Is that right; Iô's the same thin sarcasm I had used with Red. Not
really~ she answers quizzically. Cream puff. É! And I believed
it ng. Ever7thing. ÉmÉven scared of you
right now. Soooooo, maybe Éng. Ever7thing. Émt the same
time® "WhaÉ am I; Singing from the dark and
rustling inside.

Big éclair filled with lots of custard mmmmmmmmmmmill

the moisture as she licks the paper over my cheek.

I pull away asking "And how about you? Whaôre you;
Big cake I am. Rich and bad. Deviod.!!

40

You should grow up~ I assert. You really caît be two things at
the

same time.!! But she doesn't listen, poking her fingers in
through

the white paper, letting in blue speeding light as she tastes
each one. Mmmmmml This is a wonderful éclair. of I eventually
seize one finger and pull it in along with her hand, and by dint
of a sawing motion with our hands manage to rip through all of
the paper. I am growling through this process and she is

whimpering. I think that we sgv)that it aa a game where we mock everything, especially our awkwardness and fear.Ét the same time®  Whaaper, announcing, ofÉcourse, that i s my turn, soon wrapping her up, both of us giggling I become almost too eerily weak to complete the job. She ge s quite still when Éaper, announcing, ofce. 5 @e, @ rea À5,  Éill you t  k  me home; A*cr greer cycs k-d c KWith DL mother and father?lt I s like giving yourself immediately discouraging news,tbough I snap out of it to apply the tape in vertical strips on her small breasts with her breathing rustling the paper madly. You freshd sh  always uch a f  t inside there that I rip, the whole business off her only to have her chase me into her bedroom and loc he door. She is whooping hysterically on the other side as I have to look at the sacred heart on the wall and Raggedy Ann on the narrow chenille-spread bed.Should we wait for Daddy; she pipes at some distance away from the door. loudly

And then the only sound is my/pumping heart. My ear against the varnished door I can smell its darkness. I go to the lone window and try to raise it. I can, but just enough to hear the maniacal street where on top of cursing and yelling and scattered pops of bottles being thrown, someone is playing a sour trumpe  as if to cue the streetlights which come on at that moment.

41

  ce. 5 @e, @ rea À5,   something to break   he glass but talking at the same time. Holy shiti Wha  re you doing out there?   m  let me out. my mother   But the glass doorknobf turns slowly, looking like an immense jewel in the pale light from the street. Then the door is opened and sh  uch a fith sma  l pastries, bearing them in her arms and balancing precariously. I can see her eyes back there,  j  frightened of a misstep. And then i s revealed to me through an opening that she has taken off the schoolgirl blouse and wears one of the bake  s orange aprons for a haber. Sh  ith sma making  a quarter turn and

falling half onto the bed. I try to grab a pastry but the real idea of this new gameshe somehow motions) is to eat them from her. I do, myb6 f half on the bed, and when I get close to a baseballsized breast she turns away and tries to slide under but she caît get loose or keep that halter from sliding down. soon the breast is in my mouth, the nipple raspberry smeared and delicious, but she is furiously twisting to get free, the joke having gone bad on her, and É something to break etg4t on her I can. ÉBy now she is crying and Étg4t on her I can. t bit her so Ém spriÉging up□Sorry sorry sorryth bleeding Jesus looking down and Reggedy Ann smeared with crumb-dotted icing. Her tears are more like liquid giggles because now shea pointing to my pants, jammed out at the crotch. I try to cover it with both hands. She pulls the covers up and the rest of the pastries fly everywhere. Her eyes are if reen clouds and seem set back in. □Thaô's enougè'sèt if you show me yours Ét bit her so Ém spriut we caît do anythiÉg. Her eyes then motion to let my pants drop and I prance around that room, turning so I could catch the weak outside streetlight so it would be mirrored hugely in the Varnish of the door. The following minutes burn with their own fire as Éut we caît do anythi

I would agree Éith my mother were dreadful; striding over to that bed and ripping the chenille spread off, her fingers soon to be in my mouth with my sucking the sugar off of them, only stopping when I think-after many sweating excuseÜhÜmds-that É

I would agree he shriek atid sobs Ét my plunges , is ripping away at my face until a finger hooks inside my mouth-a I bite down till I taste blood. She pulls it out and I look my mouth onto hers our tongues dancing in

sugar and blood.

She had already sopped up the blood with the little apron and we were playing peek-a-boo when the baker threw a light switch on us

and on his own pulpy face. He bellowed, blood firing from his nostrils, and fell upon her, beating her through the covers.

○Whore like your motherillHe made me, forced me up muffled through the covers, and he beat harder. In that brilliant light I was frenetically rolling my clothes into R all. Forcely kept on insisting but her last one broke apart with laughing and she matched the force of her laughing to each blow.

He took a swipe at me as I catapulted by and out of that room, eventually down a cat-smelling hallway and into the back yard,

carreening into a pile of empty lard cans which rolled after me. I could hear Irish women gossiping high high above crisscrossed clotheslines as I was all but snorting flames from my nostril as I ran over mud and glass and rusty cans and dog shit, the air I pushed in front of me feeling like grease. In my nakedness I encountered only one other person, a drooling negro girl sitting in a padded inner tube in the middle of a green mud puddle. When I

C,4vret

got closer and saw her in the, light broken into small squares by the latticework under the billboards, I could see that her hair was peppered with gray.ÜhÜEJ.

43

As far as I could tell I was a usual sight to her, and I began to

wonder even as I excruciatingly ran what my impressionistic nakedness would look like on the street-side of the billboard.

The retarded girl started

slapping the water frantically and I looked back to see the baker,

a

lledj up

burnt-joking trash barrel, over, his hand moaning Belle? Belle; He flung the barrel at her but missed by a good five feet, instantly looking down at his feet.

I could feel the stinging cuts on my own; it was a relief to periodically land in fresh dogshit.

I ended up under a scruffy bush on the edge of an overgrown softball field. Among garbage and beer bottles and vomit I

panted and cried, finally pulling on my clothes, tears plopping down on my shoes as I laced ,bhem.
Past dozens of trolleys abandoned on their tracks I walked home, iRhed really, footsore as I was, stumbling over trash and slipping on
o n I (
of glass. From the streelighô's angle I must have looked like a tentative ice skater.ÜiÜMy parents were listening to our Philco when I arrived, its
orange dial the only thing visible in our living room. The celebration of VE Day was just then beginning in San Francisco, an announcer bragging about strangers kissing. Imagine mother exclaimed, "total strangerslllJesus God would I like to be therell, surprisingly burst from my father.
Though the words were meant for me, their edge was targeted for him
as she sniffed "Take a bath dear.ll
But he trumpeted, "Take a whorå makingd in thå deathly quiet following.the
announcer sped on about some girls making a banner all by themselves but couldî't get them to answer any questions in their shyness. Your father, who must think håd in thdocks oå something, means just
fill a basin and wash off.ll She sensed that I wanted to hear more from my father and from the announcer and she flatly hissed,

44

That will be more than sufficient for tonight.ll
That day had all but destroyed me and yet I still craved more happening-but my bones sunk down inside 4A* knowing that my father had probably lost his last battle in the world in the vicious genteel.
In my dark room I took my whorådocks ong rounåhouse punches at an imaginaryÜhÜbaker, who begged for mercy, falling to his knees and out of my
sight as I tried to stop my face in myslhaking mirror, surrounded
by reflections of the velvety silouettes of planes and ships.